

Report for St George's Trust following 10 months with the Community of St Anselm

Miriam Taylor

In September 2017 I joined the Community of St Anselm (CoSA) along with a diverse group of 20-35 year olds to experience what being part of a new monastic community could look like by spending 'A Year in God's Time'. It is intentionally ecumenical and welcomes members from across the globe to come together and learn from one another. Originally set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2015, the community is based at Lambeth Palace and is an integrated part of life at the palace. Each year there are around fifteen residents, the majority of whom are international, and this year I was one of the non-residents who joined them every Monday evening. We had a shared 'Rule of Life' that both residents and non-residents used, and within that we each found some things harder than others. One rule that was particularly helpful during the year was 'Desire and choice' and the phrase 'we choose one another' reminded us that within a community, we do better by choosing others before ourselves. For everyone, the year involved prayer, study and service. Prayer was an integral and sometimes radical part of the commitment to the community. As a non-resident I wasn't in chapel three times a day like the residents but did establish a stronger prayer rhythm than I had before and was able to explore prayer in new ways. A powerful moment for me each Monday was when we all put our white albs on to enter the crypt for Compline. Everyone wearing the same thing is a physical image of our unity and puts whatever differences we may have aside. We all wore crosses through the year as a reminder wherever we were that we were connected to the community. Study usually came on our monthly whole community Saturdays where we gathered for the day and had speakers sharing with us, often from their own experience of community life. Everyone was encouraged to find a way of serving in their local community, and for me that involved visiting a house where L'Arche (<https://www.larche.org.uk/>) community members lived and spending time with them each week. It was a joy to do so, and you soon realise how you both learn from each other. During the year we also had three retreat weeks. They all involved teaching and worshipping together, but the second was the most challenging as it was a silent retreat. I had no experience of a day of silence, let alone a week! It was really hard, but really good for me, and it was amazing to know the community are all holding each other up through the week, even if we couldn't say it to one another! I knew I would find this the hardest part of the year, but I think looking back it was a turning point for me and one of the best things for me.

I joined CoSA because for a while I have had a vision for a community house in my local area and wanted to know what it could be like to be part of an intentional community whilst still working. I have learnt and experienced a lot to help with this vision, but more than that I have discovered a depth of friendship with people I would never usually have met, and a community that now continues even though we are scattered across the world. The year was full of adventure, pain, surprise and joy in so many ways. But for me, I've learnt that when I spend 'A Year in God's Time' it actually means I realise that God's timing is most definitely better than my timing.

If you're interested in reading more about my year, please take a look at my blog:

<https://stepbystepinlife.wordpress.com/category/nunlife/>



Getting ready for our Commitment service at the start of the year.



Standing in front of Lambeth Palace.



After our Commissioning Service at the end of the year.